

1990

A Staff Correspondent

McGeorge Bundy, President Kennedy's top adviser on national security affairs, has joined Washington's exclusive

It was understood that several high-ranking members of the Administration are also members of the club, including at least one Cabinet member, Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon.

The White House declined comment yesterday on a pub-

However, it was learned that Mr. Bundy was accepted for membership last month.

"This is a problem of personal judgment. In my judgment it implies no disagreement or indifference of purpose with the Attorney General, for whom I have the greatest personal and professional respect."

Also listed were Hugh D. Auchincloss, stepfather of the President's wife, Jacqueline, and Charles L. Bartlett, Washington correspondent of The Chattanooga Times and a close friend of the Chief Executive.

The controversy over the Metropolitan Club, one of Washington's most select social organization's, was touched off within the club last April when Angier Biddle Duke, State Department chief of protocol, quit the club in protest against its ban of African diplomats. Mr. Duke's resignation did not become known publicly until early in August.

Attorney General Burke Marshall, chief of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

All of this has posed an embarrassing problem for Mr. Bundy and other top Administration officials who belong to the fashionable club. Some members are understood to be opposed to the club's unwritten color bar, but they appear to be a minority on the power board of directors.

In Mr. Bundy's case, it was understood he was put up for membership by friends when he arrived in Washington last January. While his application was pending, it was understood, the storm blew up over the club's color bar. Last month, he was accepted, under a provision waiving the usual twelve-year waiting period for membership in the case of top Administration officials.

"Tough Decision"

An individual who has discussed the matter with Mr. Bundy, but who declined to be identified, said the Presidential adviser had faced a "tough decision" but had decided, at least for the present, to remain a member. The source indicated that Mr. Bundy would otherwise have embarrassed the friends who sponsored his membership.

The Administration has not framed any policy on whether officials should join the club, and apparently it has been left up to each individual to decide. Some club members are understood to feel that the proper course is to remain a member and seek to change the long-standing custom barring Negroes from the premises. Other members are said to feel that a private club has the right to select its own members and to have its own rules.

Many of the nation's leading attorneys, business men, journalists, publishers and political figures are members of the club, whose president is Nelson T. Hartson, member of the Washington law firm of Hogan and Hartson.

The resignation of the President's brother and of two other Administration officials poses a delicate political question for the Administration, which is seeking to convince Negro voters that it champions their rights. President Kennedy has never been a member of the club, according to a White House spokesman.